

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10
NSAE-00 PA-01 ICA-11 SP-02 MCT-02 PM-05 NSC-05
SS-15 /074 W
-----010423 150234Z /73

R 121246Z JUL 78
FM USINT BAGHDAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0000
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, IZ
SUBJECT: ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

1. AS THE ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS DRAW NEAR, IT IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY CLEAR THAT THE GOI INTENDS TO MAKE THEM MAJOR EVENTS (JULY 14--20 YEARS SINCE THE OVERTHROW OF THE MONARCHY, JULY 17--10 YEARS OF BAATH RULE). THE PRESS IS FULL OF REPORTS ON PARADES, SPEECHES, SPECIAL ENTERTAINMENT AND RELATED ACTIVITIES THAT WILL BE SCHEDULED. BAGHDAD IS PLASTERED WITH SIGNS AND SLOGANS, BANDS PLAYING IN THE BACKS OF TRUCKS CURSE THE MAIN STREETS, COLORED LIGHTS, FLAGS AND BUNTING/STREAMERS ARE EVERYWHERE. THE OVERALL EFFECT IS FESTIVE IF GARISH.

2. IN CONTRAST, THERE ARE PERSISTENT RUMORS OF UNDERLYING PROBLEMS.

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A. THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS IS RATHER EMBARRASSED BY THE RECURRING STORY THAT A COUP IS PLANNED DURING OR IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE CELEBRATIONS. THE EMBARRASSMENT STEMS FROM THE PERCEIVED REQUIREMENT TO REPORT THE RUMORS, EVEN THOUGH IT WOULD APPEAR UNLIKELY THAT ANY COUP SO POORLY ORGANIZED AS TO BE KNOWN TO FOREIGNERS HAS MUCH CHANCE OF SUCCESS. BAGHDAD WILL BE FULL OF TROOPS FOR THE OCCASION, AND THE

MILITARY IS THE MOST LOGICAL CANDIDATE FOR ANY UNDERTAKING OF THIS KIND, BUT WHETHER THIS INCREASES OR DECREASES THE POSSIBILITY OF STAGING A COUP IS PROBLEMATICAL.

B. A COMPANION RUMOR IS THAT IRAQ'S ENEMIES WILL UNDERTAKE SOMETHING IN THE TERRORISM LINE TO EMBARRASS THE REGIME. MEMBERS OF THE FOREIGN COMMUNITY KEEP TELLING EACH OTHER THAT THEY HAVE BEEN ADVISED BY KNOWLEDGEABLE SOURCES TO STAY AWAY FROM THE CELEBRATIONS, THE MOST LOGICAL TIME AND PLACE FOR SUCH ACTIVITIES TO BE UNDERTAKEN, AND PROBABLY ALSO THE MOST DIFFICULT.

R. STOREKEEPERS HAVE REPORTED THAT THEY HAVE NOTICEABLY FEWER BLOC CUSTOMERS, SPARKING A RUMOR THAT IRAQ IS GETTING RID OF SOME OF ITS EASTERN EUROPEAN TECHNICIANS. THE STORY COULD BE THE RESULT OF SUMMER VACATIONS, PROJECT COMPLETIONS, TRADING AT ANOTHER STORE, OR JUST IMAGINATION, BUT IT IS CURRENTLY A HOT ITEM ON THE WESTERN FOREIGNERS CIRCUIT.

3. ONE RUMOR THAT IS PROBABLY QUITE FACTUAL IS THAT THE

GOI WILL PUBLISH A WHITE PAPER IN CONNECTION WITH THE JULY 17 FESTIVITIES. IT WILL BE A DETAILED STATEMENT OF BAATHI GAINS, GOALS AND POLICIES, WHICH WILL MAKE EVERYTHING CLEAR IN THE FIELD OF POLITICS, ECONOMICS, FOREIGN RELATIONS, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DOMESTIC AFFAIRS, ETC. WE EXPECT THAT ENGLISH LANGUAGE VERSIONS WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE.

4. COMMENT: UNDERCURRENTS OF UNEASE ARE DIFFICULT TO SEPARATE FROM SERIOUS CONCERNS IN IRAQ, WHERE HARD INFORMATION IS NOT EASILY OBTAINABLE. WE HAVE NOTHING TO SUBSTANTIATE ANY OF THE STORIES IN PARA TWO AND THEIR ONLY SIGNIFICANCE LIES PERHAPS IN THEIR RATHER WIDESPREAD EXISTENCE.

PECK

NOTE BY OC/T: TELEGRAM DELAYED IN TRANSMISSION.

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